

Religions in Ancient Asia

HINDUISM

Caste System: The social divisions in the Hindu religion

There are FOUR separate castes or classes.

1. Brahmin(BRAHM*un) - Hindu priests.
This was the highest class in Hindu society.
2. Kshatriya (kuh*SHAH*tree*uh)Warriors and Rulers
3. Vaisya (VYSH*yuh) Landowners, merchants,artisans.
4. Sudra (SOO* druh) Servants and workers.

Below the fourth group was a group called the UNTOUCHABLES - this group was so low they were not even considered a class.

- * Untouchables were rejected by all others.
- * Had to use separate wells for water.
- * Other caste groups were not allowed to have contact with the Untouchables.

Reincarnation and the Caste System

A major belief in Hinduism is that people lead many lives until they reach spiritual perfection (which means they have lived a perfect life)

This belief, that the soul lives on after death in a new body, is called REINCARNATION - or REBIRTH.

Brahman priests encouraged Hindus to accept and follow the rules of the caste into which they were born.

I

If they performed the duties of their caste, they might be rewarded by being born into a higher caste in their next life.

If they neglected their duties and did not live a good life, they might be born into a lower caste - or they might even be reborn as an untouchable, or perhaps a bug or a worm!

Hindus believe that EVERY living creature has a soul!! And that all living creature will be reincarnated.

So you could be a duck in one life, and a person in another!

For thousands of years Brahman priests used reincarnation and their interpretations of the VEDAS (sacred songs) to give India's complex society order.

Each person had a place in society and a job to do according to their caste.

No change was possible!

If this life was hard, the goal was to live it well, in hopes that you would be reborn into a better life.

Buddhism

- * Founded by Buddha
- * 4 Main Ideas - "Four Noble Truths"
 1. Everything in life is sad, or sorrowful
 2. The cause of sadness, or sorrow, is desire (wanting things) and attachment. People seek (look for) joys that lead to suffering.
 3. The way to end all pain is to end all wants.

4. To stop sorrow you must follow the EIGHTFOLD PATH

- * Right Knowledge
- * Right Purpose
- * Right Speech
- * Right Action
- * Right Living
- * Right Effort
- * Right Thinking
- * Right Meditation